

## **9 FAM APPENDIX F, 300 VISA SUBJECT FILES**

*(CT:VISA-1021; 09-15-2008)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/VO/L/R)*

### **9 FAM 301 SETTING UP VISA SUBJECT FILES**

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- a. Subject files are important references for policy, precedent, and procedural information that are not codified in the Foreign Affairs Manual. They are where information is filed that is general in application rather than specific to an individual case. This may include ALDACs and other cables about laws, regulations, procedures, and reporting requirements; correspondence with local authorities; and internal memoranda about policy and procedures. Copies or extracts of information regarding individual cases that contain useful policy or precedent information of general application may also be filed in a subject file.
- b. Each visa-issuing office shall maintain subject files (CVIS files) relating to general visa operations, programs, policies, procedures, or concepts. The subject files must conform to the instructions provided in 5 FAH-3, TAGS/Terms Handbook and should be arranged alphabetically as stated in 5 FAH-3 (see also Section 301.1 below).
- c. Administrative files containing operational housekeeping records, such as the management controls and consular fee records, operational reports on consular activities, personnel actions, etc., should be files as Consular Management (CMGT) files rather than CVIS in many cases.
- d. A separate similar subject file must be maintained for classified materials. (See 9 FAM Appendix F, 400.) A cross-reference to the existence of a classified file must be prominently placed in the corresponding unclassified subject or case file to ensure that classified information is not overlooked.

## **9 FAM 301.1 Divisions and Subdivisions**

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- a. Subject files are organized using TAGS and TERMS, as outlined in 5 FAH-3, the TAGS/Terms Handbook. The seven consular TAGS provide the broad classification while primary subdivisions are identified using TERMS. Further subdivisions under TERMS are made using secondary or tertiary terms. Persons responsible for filing policy, precedent, and procedural information need to be thoroughly familiar with the TAGS/TERMS system to ensure information is identified and filed effectively; in other words, so that it can be found when needed. Copies of some ALDACS or other records covering more than one subject may need to be filed in more than one place (or clearly cross-referenced) to ensure that the information is readily available as needed.
- b. Posts should use file dividers to set apart subjects that require subdivisions, such as IMMIGRANT, INELIGIBILITY, and NONIMMIGRANT.
- c. A breakdown of folders might consist of the following subject areas:
  - (1) IMMIGRANT, with secondary terms such as CONDITIONAL, SPECIAL, EMPLOYMENT-BASED FIRST PREFERENCE, etc.;
  - (2) INELIGIBILITY, with separate folders for the individual grounds, - (1), (2), (3), etc., - or generic grounds, - CRIMINAL, MEDICAL, SECURITY, etc.; and
  - (3) NONIMMIGRANT, with a breakdown of business, student, visitor, etc.

## **9 FAM 301.2 Secondary Terms**

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Using more than one secondary term may be necessary to refine the files further. As stated above, the dividers would be marked IMMIGRANT, INELIGIBILITY, and NONIMMIGRANT. The folders within those areas of the files would bear both the primary term and the secondary term or terms, making it easier to return guidance material folders to the files.

## **9 FAM 302 SETTING UP FILE FOLDERS**

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The subject file should not have any empty folders. Posts should set up a folder only if or when guidance material in some form is received (for example, a guidance telegram or a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) memorandum written for the files by a supervising officer).

## **9 FAM 303 LIMITING SUBJECT FILES TO GUIDANCE MATERIALS**

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The Department emphasizes that, while communications concerning individual cases will use the same primary and secondary terms, posts should file only communications containing guidance for general use in the CVIS subject file; i.e. copies of communications regarding individual cases which contain information of general application might be filed in subject files.

## **9 FAM 304 RETENTION OF MATERIAL IN SUBJECT FILES**

*(CT:VISA-1021; 09-15-2008)*

The material in the general visa subject file should be retained for as long as it serves a useful purpose. Although some telegrams technically expire 30 days from date of issuance, posts should retain such materials until they are superseded by Change Transmittals (formerly Transmittal Letters or TLs) incorporating the guidance material into 9 FAM. Posts may remove cancelled communications from their subject folders either at that time or during the next annual review of files material.

## **9 FAM 306 CHRONOLOGICAL FILES**

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- a. A chron file is a temporary file of copies of documents in chronological order kept in addition to the originals filed in the subject or case files. Every post should maintain a chron file of all incoming ALDAC telegrams on consular affairs. All current local standard operating procedures (SOPs) should also be maintained in a chron file. Maintaining copies of other communications chronologically is optional but may be of help in locating

information when the exact subject is uncertain. Posts should avoid routinely keeping chron files for all types of correspondence as their maintenance often consumes more labor than they save. Individual officers may wish to keep their own chron files of unclassified items (cables, memos, letters, etc.) which they have drafted. This is useful for the officer at Employee Evaluation Report (EER) time.

- b. Visa sections should maintain their own chronological files, in addition to the chronological files kept in the post's Central Records Unit. For maximum utility, posts should mark on the visa section's chronological copies the terms under which the subject file copies have been filed.

## **9 FAM 307 TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS**

*(CT:VISA-1021; 09-15-2008)*

Posts must retain copies of treaties and reciprocal agreements and all communications amending or interpreting them as long as the treaty or agreement is in effect.